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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AORC](#) [ECON](#) [ECIN](#) [CM](#)

SUBJECT: CAMEROON: CEMAC CONFERENCE - LOTS OF PROTOCOL,
LITTLE ACTION

Classified By: Pol/Econ Officer, Linnisa Wahid for reasons 1.4 b & d

¶1. (SBU) Summary: From June 19-24, Cameroon hosted the Ninth Ordinary Session of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) in Yaounde. The Conference focused on the free movement of people within CEMAC, the creation of a CEMAC passport and airline and a proposal to rotate the Bank of Central Africa (BEAC) governorship. The session produced little in the way of concrete results to make CEMAC a more viable regional organization. The group, however, agreed to transfer the multinational peacekeeping force in CAR (FOMUC) to the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC). CEMAC called for the UN Security Council to increase support for MINAUD, EUFOR and MINURCAT peacekeeping forces to secure the borders of Sudan, Chad and CAR. The local media highlighted the early departure from the conference of Equitorial Guinean President Nguema, for reasons that are unclear. End Summary.

Free Movement of People

¶2. (C) Cameroon hosted CEMAC's Ninth Ordinary Session of Heads of State with the Presidents of Equatorial Guinea (EG), Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville (Congo B), the Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon and the Prime Minister of Chad in attendance. The President of Sao Tome and Principe, the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Secretary General of CEEAC came as observers. Arlette Kono, CEMAC specialist in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX), told Poloff that one of the most pressing issues discussed was the implementation of the CEMAC passport and the free movement of people within the region. To date, Chad, Cameroon, Congo-B and CAR allow CEMAC nationals to travel visa free within their borders, while EG and Gabon still require visas. Kono said that EG and Gabon have expressed concerns about the authenticity of birth certificates from other CEMAC countries. According to Kono, until other CEMAC countries are able to secure their birth certificates, EG and Gabon would not offer visa-free travel. CEMAC nationals who are members of government, parliamentarians, enrolled students, investors, teachers or researchers are exempted from the visa requirement to enter EG or Gabon.

3.(C) Kono told Poloff that the CEMAC passport which was supposed to be implemented by July 2007 was delayed until January 2010, due to concerns about individual member countries' treaties with non-CEMAC members, passport language and the authenticity of birth certificates used to obtain passports. Kono said that EG and Gabon were particularly concerned about Cameroon's immigration treaty with Nigeria, which allows Nigerians to travel visa-free to Cameroon as well as the ease in which one could obtain fraudulent Cameroonian documentation to enter other CEMAC countries without a visa.

BEAC Remains with Gabon

¶4. (C) According to Kono, the President of EG, Obiang Nguema, proposed rotating the BEAC governorship among the six CEMAC countries. Kono said that EG justified its claim by stating that because it contributed more than 40% of BEAC's financial capital it should have a more prominent position in running the institution. CEMAC denied the proposal noting that according to the CEMAC treaty Gabon, one of the founding members of CEMAC, permanently holds the post of BEAC governor.

CEMAC Declarations

¶5. (U) The CEMAC Conference declared that members were pleased with the recent legislative and municipal election in Cameroon, Congo-B, Gabon and EG. The Conference adopted a resolution to condemn the repeated attacks by rebels in Chad and called on the Security Council to solve the Darfur crisis by enlarging the EUFOR, MINURCAT and MINAUD missions. The Conference finalized the transfer of the Multinational Force of CAR (FOMUC) to the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC). The Conference declared that the next President of CEMAC would be Francois Bozize, the President of CAR, and determined that March 16 would be "CEMAC Day". There is a recognition among members of the possible benefits of a regional Air Cemac, which could dramatically improve travel within the region, but the idea has no new wind behind it.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Personal ambition continues to hamper CEMAC's productivity. President Biya's relationship with EG President Obiang Nguema is lukewarm at best, aggravated by a steady flow of expulsions of Cameroonians. Nguema departed the conference early, which generated significant media speculation that he was upset (his departure was just after the BEAC discussion). The official GRC explanation was that Nguema left due to a family emergency; a senior contact in the presidency told us the EG President departed for a prior engagement in Geneva. The GRC, not surprisingly, depicts the conference as a success. While we attended only the opening session and can only judge the conference from the outside, it appears to have brought no real progress in dealing with the major issues confronting CEMAC or the region.
GARVEY